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Status: Senior scholar
Field of expertise: African Studies

INSTITUTION
Emory University
Atlanta, GA 30322-1007

APPLICATION INFORMATION
Title: Rethinking African Art History and the Art-Historical Monograph in the Era of Digital Publication
Grant period: From 2020-02-01 to 2020-08-31
Project field(s): African Studies; Art History and Criticism

Description of project: _Mapping Senufo_—an in-progress, collaborative, born-digital publication project I initiated and now co-direct—contributes to my larger effort to forge alternate possibilities for how scholars study “traditional” arts of Africa and present findings to broad audiences. _Mapping Senufo_ also reflects a commitment to taking seriously the long-established understanding that a marker of identity, like the labeling of an art style or knowledge itself, is historically constituted, fluid, and positional. The multimodal, digital publication that the project team is developing will exemplify in its form the contingent nature of identities, art style labeling, and knowledge production. With a seven-month NEH-Mellon Fellowship for Digital Publication, I will generate text for the publication’s introduction and a chapter-equivalent section of it, and I will lead the project team in completing the chapter-equivalent section to submit to Stanford University Press for review.

REFERENCE LETTERS
Z. S. Strother
Riggio Professor of African Art
Art History and Archaeology
Columbia University
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Paul Jaskot
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Art, Art History, and VS
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**RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTION**

What might research and the publication of results look like if scholars producing them integrated decades of theories about the construction of identities and the politics of knowledge production into their work on arts of Africa once considered “traditional”? *Mapping Senufo*—an in-progress, collaborative, born-digital publication project that I initiated and now co-direct with Constantine Petridis—offers a model for joining such theories with research and publication practice. It contributes to my larger effort to forge a range of alternate possibilities for how scholars study “traditional” or “classical” arts of Africa and present their findings to broad audiences with attention to specificity. *Mapping Senufo* also reflects our commitment to taking seriously the long-established understanding that a marker of identity, like the labeling of an art style or knowledge itself, is historically constituted, fluid, and positional. The multimodal, digital publication that the project team is developing will exemplify in its form the contingent nature of identities, art style labeling, and knowledge production.

**WHAT IS SENUFO?**

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when the French government colonized areas of West Africa, French officials misunderstood what the term *Senufo* meant and used it to name a discrete cultural or ethnic group. As objects made by African artists whose names were rarely recorded in print entered Europe and North America, capturing the attention of European and American artists, including André Derain, Pablo Picasso, and Man Ray, European and American art enthusiasts began to use the term *Senufo* to name a distinct style of art. When art enthusiasts labeled African objects as Senufo, they assumed the distribution of artistic form overlapped neatly with the distribution of timeless cultural or ethnic groups. But scholars have for decades recognized that framing analysis of art or other phenomena in terms of timeless cultural or ethnic groups obscures historical complexity (e.g., Vandenhouwe 1948, Sieber and Rubin 1968, Kasfir 1984). Nevertheless, scholars and other connoisseurs continue to find such categories convenient for organizing art and explaining it, thereby perpetuating outdated ideas.

In my first, single-authored, peer-reviewed book *Senufo Unbound: Dynamics of Art and Identity in West Africa* (The Cleveland Museum of Art and 5 Continents Editions, 2015), I deconstruct the term *Senufo* to identify colonial assumptions embedded in it and in its application to the arts. The book accompanied a major international exhibition organized by Petridis, who was then based at the Cleveland Museum of Art and is now at the Art Institute of Chicago. My book and the exhibition sparked development of *Mapping Senufo*, a digital publication project aimed at reassembling the term *Senufo* and the corpus of art it names through careful attention to situational perspectives and partial meanings.

**MAPPING SENUFO**

As a multimodal, digital publication, *Mapping Senufo* will manifest Bruno Latour’s understanding of the social. In *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Latour (2005) argues that the social does not encompass a set of qualities imposed on people but rather emerges from interrelations. He asserts that an “ongoing process made up of uncertain, fragile, controversial, and ever-shifting ties” constitutes the social (28). An identity or corpus of art emerges from and is similarly defined by ongoing interactions (cf. Appiah 2018). The presences, absences, and range of viewpoints covered in *Mapping Senufo* will evoke such uncertain, fragile, controversial, and ever-shifting aspects of the Senufo category.

A key advantage of multimodal, digital monographs recently published by Stanford University Press (SUP) is that they harness interactivity of digital environments to render readers active participants in knowledge construction (e.g., Bauch 2016, Mullaney 2019). *Mapping Senufo* will exploit the same potential. Readers will isolate and investigate particular objects, people, places, and events integral to the ongoing recognition of a single corpus of art as Senufo and also map connections among its elements. Readers will become authors of their own contingent understandings, enacting our argument that a category of art and knowledge about it are always circumstantial and incomplete (cf. Ball 2004).

*Mapping Senufo* will also echo aspects of knowledge transmission prevalent around the borders of present-day Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, and Mali, where Senufo-speaking communities are concentrated. Burkina-born scholar Ibrahim Traoré Banakourou described to me how he acquired local knowledge from his elders in Burkina Faso and Mali. Rather than articulating clear arguments at the outset and supplying evidence to support it, the elders often presented the younger learner with riddles,
directed him to certain evidence, and allowed him to arrive at his own conclusions. The approach, like the design for Mapping Senufo, highlights the time-based and subjective nature of knowledge acquisition.

**PUBLICATION OVERVIEW**

After I presented Mapping Senufo to Friederike Sundaram, digital projects acquisitions editor for SUP in the fall of 2016, Sundaram invited the project team to submit a chapter-equivalent section to the press for review. We will submit the section to SUP in August 2020. The full publication will include an introduction and a conclusion that are similar in length and structure to their counterparts in conventional monographs. Four multimodal, interactive sections that feature flexible reading pathways through images, maps, and visualizations will form the core of the monograph (see appendix). Limited but carefully composed text, including alt-text for accessibility, will accompany the visual elements.

1. **1890s to 1910s: CREATING A DEFINITION FOR THE TERM SENUFO**

In this section of Mapping Senufo, we will illustrate how several French colonial officials, an Ivoirian politician, and a German ethnographer contributed to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century definitions of the term Senufo. Petridis and I have now scoured relevant archives in France and Germany.

2. **1920s to 1930s: EARLY COLLECTING OF AND RESEARCH ON SENUFO ARTS**

In this section, we will show how in the 1920s and 1930s, European collectors, a European scholar, and African artists contributed to recognition of a Senufo corpus. We will identify limited possibilities for recovering specific information about art in firsthand observers’ records. Petridis and I have now examined relevant objects and documents in Brussels, Copenhagen, Ghent, and Paris.

3. **1940s to 1950s: ENLARGING THE CORPUS IN AFRICA, EUROPE, AND NORTH AMERICA**

In this section, which we will complete during the fellowship period, we will demonstrate how European missionaries, officers, dealers, and anthropologists as well as many unidentified African artists and dealers worked in different ways to expand the corpus of arts labeled as Senufo. Petridis and I have reviewed relevant objects and documents in Côte d’Ivoire, France, Switzerland, and the United States.

4. **1960s to 1970s: EXPANDING FIELD-BASED STUDY OF SENUFO ARTS**

In the 1960s and 1970s, two American scholars conducted extensive research on Senufo arts in northern Côte d’Ivoire. We will show tensions between broad generalizations and more specific information in the scholars’ published and archival records in this section of Mapping Senufo. We will examine specific details and highlight silences in the scholars’ work. Petridis and I have already visited relevant archives.

**METHODS AND WORKPLAN**

With a seven-month NEH-Mellon Fellowship for Digital Publication, I will be based at Emory University and will work full-time on Mapping Senufo from 1 February to 31 August 2020. I am slated to receive a post-tenure research leave from September 2019 through August 2020. By the start of the fellowship period, the team will have generated a nonlinear structure for Mapping Senufo as well as developed preliminary wireframes for one chapter-equivalent section of the publication. The team’s visual artist and graphic designer Mark Addison Smith of the City College of New York (CCNY), a Hispanic-Serving Institution, will have started to create custom illustrations. The publication’s custom design will rely on digital interactivity and visual images to convey our argument to broad audiences.

From **1 February through 31 March 2020**, I will complete my review of archival materials and finalize text for the chapter-equivalent section of the publication we will submit to SUP. Petridis and I will discuss text I write during weekly phone meetings, and he will review drafts. I will also review illustrations for the visual presentation of our argument and work with the project team to refine the images. The 220-character texts Petridis recently created for the Art Institute of Chicago’s iPad app in the museum’s African art galleries will provide one model for explaining complicated scholarly ideas to broad audiences through carefully selected images and limited text. In addition, Petridis and I will meet with members of the project’s advisory board to solicit feedback on the publication’s content and structure. And I will present our work on Mapping Senufo at CCNY. Smith may join me for the presentation. Renata Kobetts Miller, CCNY’s Deputy Dean of the Division of Humanities and the Arts, contacted me in July 2018 with the invitation to present the project at CCNY in March 2020.

From **1 April through 31 August 2020**, I will meet at least weekly with Petridis and other members of the team based at the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship. I will direct the team in
transforming wireframes, text, and illustrations for the project into a multimodal, digital chapter-equivalent section for submission to SUP by 31 August 2020. Petridis and I will relay feedback from the advisory board to the rest of the team, and we will request additional input from people not associated with the project. In consultation with Petridis, I will also write the introduction to the publication.

COMPETENCIES, SKILLS, AND ACCESS
My knowledge of arts identified as Senufo draws on extensive field experience in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, and Mali as well as significant archival research and object-focused study in Africa, Europe, and North America. Information I have gathered in the field, archives, and museums will inform my writing during the fellowship period. Together, Petridis and I have language skills necessary for the project. My first language is English. I am able to speak, read, and write in French at an advanced level. Petridis’s first language is Dutch. He also speaks, reads, and writes with proficiency in English, French, and German.

I have worked to develop expertise in digital humanities and digital publication through my participation in summer institutes focused on digital mapping and art history and on digital publishing in the humanities as well as through my organization of MAP IT | Little Dots, Big Ideas, a public lecture series at Emory. In addition, I have expanded my knowledge of mapping and geography through my attendance at and participation in four American Association of Geographers annual meetings since 2015.

Petridis and I are co-authoring the publication, and we are co-directing its development. Other team members—including a computer engineer, database experts, digital scholarship specialists, geographers, and a visual artist as well as graduate and undergraduate research assistants—have worked on different aspects of the project’s development. The team, based at the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship, is committed to the publication’s realization.

FINAL PRODUCT AND DISSEMINATION
Following from SUP’s successful review of a chapter-equivalent section of Mapping Senufo, we will complete the full custom-built monograph for open-access publication through the press. As we work, we will continue to adhere to the design, accessibility, usability, sustainability, and code requirements as well as other specifications detailed in SUP’s digital project preparation guidelines and the Kairos Style Guide.

Africanist scholars, art historians, and other humanists will constitute audiences for Mapping Senufo. Digital humanists interested in conceptual rather than positivist approaches to digital research and publication methods will comprise another audience for it. We also seek to engage broader audiences in and beyond the United States. With this goal in mind, we have created an advisory board for the project that includes university scholars, museum curators, and art educators at a range of institutions. In addition, we have discussed the project with a government official in Côte d’Ivoire, who expressed interest in the project when we first described it to him in January 2014, and I presented the project to an audience at the Musée des Civilisations in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, in July 2016. After we publish Mapping Senufo in English, we will work to create a version of it in French to make it accessible to readers in the francophone West African countries where Senufo communities are prevalent.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT
My ambition is nothing less than to change how we conduct research on classical arts of Africa and present our findings. The term Senufo exists, and it has variously referred to occupation, language, geography, culture, or other phenomena. But the term’s meaning neither is stable nor refers to a singular, fixed entity. Mapping Senufo began with the desire to recover lost perspectives and focus on specific histories of single objects to offer alternatives to colonial assumptions. Our efforts to identify and map specific locations linked to objects labeled as Senufo led us to realize that place names attached to different objects provide different kinds of information. Locations may relate to places where an object was reportedly made, documented, or acquired. We also concluded that the verifiability or reliability of information varies, even when the information comes from observers with firsthand experience. We have determined that in order to understand the range of objects identified as Senufo and available information about them, we must “reassemble the social.” The multimodal, digital monograph we eventually produce will allow readers to arrive at refreshed understandings through their selections of stories about particular objects, people, places, and events involved in the construction of a category of art known as Senufo. It will also demonstrate alternate models for the production and transmission of knowledge.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Steiner, C. “Discovering African Art … Again?” *African Arts* 29, no. 4 (1996): 1, 4, 6, 8, 93.


Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi

RELEVANT CURRENT AND PAST POSITIONS
2013-2015 Curatorial Advisor for “Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa,” major international exhibition organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio
2010-2013 Assistant Professor (Arts of Africa), Art Department, The City College of The City University of New York, New York, New York

EDUCATION
2002-2010 University of California, Los Angeles, California
Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Art History (awarded 2010)
Honors: UCLA’s single nominee for the 2011-12 Council of Graduate Schools / University Microfilms International Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Humanities / Fine Arts
2001-2002 Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Norwich, England
Master of Arts, Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas (awarded 2002)
“Birifor and ‘Lobi’ Architecture: A Study of the Birifor Yir of Danivaar, Northern Region, Ghana”
Honors: Distinction
1996-2000 G. W. C. Whiting School of Engineering, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland
Bachelor of Arts, Major in Geography and Major in History of Art (awarded 2000)
Honors: General Honors, Departmental Honors in History of Art, Phi Beta Kappa

SELECTED FIELDWORK
2016 Côte d’Ivoire (2 weeks), South Africa (2 weeks)
2014 Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire (2 weeks)
2013 Burkina Faso (2 weeks)
2012 Burkina Faso (1 month)
2005-2007 Burkina Faso (19 months)
2004 Burkina Faso and Mali (1 month)

SELECTED AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS
2018 Fellowship, From Prototype to Published KairosCamp, an Institute for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and hosted by the Digital Publishing Institute, West Virginia University
2016-2017 Distinguished Junior External Fellowship, Stanford Humanities Center, Stanford University
2016-2017 Emory University Research Committee (URC) Award for Mapping Senufo development
2015-2016 Emory College of Arts and Sciences Program to Enhance Research and Scholarship (PERS) Award for Mapping Senufo development
2014 Kress Summer Institute on Digital Mapping and Art History Fellowship at Middlebury College
2013 Spring Term Visiting Research Fellowship, Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia
2008-2009 Chester Dale Art History Fellowship, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
2006-2008 The Ittleson Fellowship, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art
2005-2006 Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship (Burkina Faso), U.S. Department of Education

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS
BOOK
Honors: One of three books in English nominated for Tribal Art’s Prix International du Livre d’Art Tribal (PILAT), October 2015
ARTICLES
2017  “Introduction to the Special Issue: Spatial Art History in the Digital Realm,” co-authored by Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi and Joanna Gardner-Huggett, Historical Geography 45 (hosted by UNM University Libraries), 17-36
2016  “Beyond the Surface: Where Cultural Contexts and Scientific Analyses Meet in the Conservation of Komo Helmet Masks in Museum Collections,” co-authored by Robin O’Hern, Ellen Pearlstein, and Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi, Museum Anthropology 39:1, 70-86
2016  “MAP IT | Little Dots, Big Ideas: Transforming the Humanities with Geo-Spatial Analysis,” Southern Spaces (online), 28 June [1746 words]
2015  “Senoufo: Art and Identity in West Africa,” co-authored by Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi and Constantine Petridis, Tribal Arts 75: 70-9
2015  “Senoufo Unbound: Dynamics of Art and Identity in West Africa,” co-authored by Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi and Constantine Petridis, African Arts, 48:1, 6-23
2013  “Masquerades as the Public Face: Art of Contemporary Hunters’ Associations in Western Burkina Faso,” African Arts 46:4, 46-59

PRESENTATIONS
2018  “Shattering Single Stories in the Presentation of Historical Arts of Africa,” invited presentation at Condition Report 3 on Art History in Africa, RAW Material Company Center for Art Knowledge and Society, Dakar, Senegal, 21 September
2018  “Mapping Senoufo:Mapping as a Method to Undermine Colonial Histories,” paper presented at the Destabilizing the Geographic in Modern and Contemporary Art session at the College Art Association annual conference, Los Angeles, California, 23 February
2017  “Mapping Senoufo: Visualizing Time- and Place-Based Information about Historical Arts of West Africa,” invited presentation at the Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis, Stanford, California, 28 February
2016  “Out of the Picture and Off the Map: A Refreshed Look at Arts Identified as Senoufo,” invited lecture at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 17 November

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS
2018  Co-organizer with Yanna Yannakakis, Rethinking Archives through Digital Mapping session at the American Association of Geographers annual meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana
2017  Co-organizer with Edward Triplett and chair of Geographical History: From Maps as Documents to Maps as Method session at the American Association of Geographers annual meeting
2016- Creator and organizer of MAP IT | Little Dots, Big Ideas, a series of lectures and workshops on digital mapping at the humanities, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia
2015  Co-organizer with Niall Atkinson of the Visual Geographies: Reconceptualizing the Terrain of Art History with Historical GIS session at the American Association of Geographers annual meeting

COMPETENCIES
  French (advanced speaking, reading, and writing knowledge) + Geographic Information Systems (basic)
8 May 2019

Recommendation for Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi
Z. S. Strother, Riggio Professor of African Art